

Incisional Care After _____ Surgery

Your skin protects your body from infections. Now that you have an incision (cut) in your skin, an infection could develop. You need to take good care of your incision to help prevent infection.

Steri-strips

Steri-strips are small pieces of tape that may have been placed to hold your incision together. They will start to loosen in about five days. Leave them on until they fall off. If they have not fallen off after ten days, you may remove them.

Staples

In some cases, metal staples are used to hold an incision together. Staples are usually removed before discharge. If you go home with staples, your doctor will tell you when they can be removed. This will be done at the VA Medical Center or by a private doctor or a public health nurse.

Showering and Bathing

If you have steri-strips, you may shower normally but try to avoid directly spraying the incision.

If you have staples _____ .

Let the water run over your incision and gently pat dry. Do not rub or scrub your incision. Do not shower if your incision has any openings, unless your doctor says you can.

Do not take a tub bath until your incision is closed and completely healed, about four weeks.

Do not use lotions or powders on your incision until it is completely healed.

Signs and Symptoms of Infection

Check your incision everyday for signs of infection:

- Redness along the incision (some pinkness and a small amount of bloody drainage are normal after surgery)
- Increased tenderness, swelling, or puffiness
- New openings along the incision
- Yellowish, greenish or foul smelling discharge
- Fever and/or chills

Take your temperature in the morning and evening for two weeks after your surgery. You should call the numbers listed below if you have:

- Shaking, chills
- Unexpected or unexplained temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Any of the other signs of infection listed on the front side of this sheet

If you have any of the signs listed above or questions, call Telephone Care Communications System (TCCS) at (612) 725-2242, Monday through Friday (except holidays), between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. At any other time, call Urgent Care at (612) 467-2771.

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